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Speech by [Paulina Brandberg](#)

National Statement delivered by Minister for Gender Equality and Working Life Paulina Brandberg at the 68th Session of the Commission on Status of Women

Published 13 March 2024

National Statement delivered by Minister for Gender Equality and Working Life Paulina Brandberg, at the 68th Session of the Commission on Status of Women, New York, 12 March 2024.

Check against delivery.

Madame Chair,

Excellencies, Distinguished delegates, Members of Civil Society,

It is an honour for me to address the 68th session of the Commission on the Status of Women. Sweden aligns itself with the statement made by Belgium on behalf of the EU, as well the statement by the Group of Friends for the Elimination of Violence against Women and Girls and that of the LGBTI Core Group, which I delivered a few days ago.

Our thoughts today are with all women and girls living in conflict situations, under repression or other emergencies, be it in Gaza, Israel, Sudan, Afghanistan, Iran or in Ukraine. There is no conflict that is gender neutral. It is true when we think about the women who are forced to give birth without access to healthcare or pain relief. It is obvious when we think about the women who are subjected to rape and sexualized torture.

In my own region – and I am now speaking about Ukraine – Russia's full-scale invasion continues to have appalling consequences for women and girls. They have been forced to flee their homes in huge numbers, many bringing with them horrendous accounts of systematic sexual violence. International law, including the UN Charter, humanitarian law and human rights law, must be respected by all States. Sweden stands united in strong solidarity with the Ukrainian people. My government will continue to support Ukraine and contribute to hold Russia accountable for its crimes in and against Ukraine.

Let me be crystal clear. International law applies to everyone and always, regardless of geographical context. International humanitarian law must be respected and civilians – women and men, girls and boys – must be protected in all conflict situations no matter where in the world they take place. And those who stay silent when faced with violence against women and children in any conflict, cannot claim to stand up for women's rights.

Madame Chair

I am a proud member of a government that has committed to include a gender equality perspective into all areas of policy-making.

Because human rights are universal, indivisible, interrelated, interdependent and mutually reinforcing. They apply to all, regardless of sex, gender identity or expression, ethnicity, religion or other belief, disability, sexual orientation, age, or other status. The Swedish Government is committed to ensure equal rights and

the full and equal enjoyment of human rights of LGBTIQ-persons.

Madam Chair

Discriminatory laws, negative social norms and practices create – and perpetuate – fundamental and systemic barriers to the empowerment and full realization of women's enjoyment of human rights across the world. Gender equality is an essential component when we look at the theme of this year's CSW. For example, the latest estimate by the World Bank, shows that the GDP per capita would be almost 20 percent higher if all gender employment gaps were to be closed globally.

Financial freedom is key. It empowers women to take control of their lives, take charge of their finances, and being able to leave a destructive relationship.

As most of us are aware of, women are often at the forefront in democratic change. Local women's rights organisations and feminist movements play a crucial role in addressing the root causes of gender inequalities. Men and boys, in all their diversity, must engage in this work – as agents of change as well as beneficiaries of gender equality, investing in an inclusive and positive masculinity.

Madame Chair

As we can see around the world, rising repression often goes hand in hand with a pushback against the human rights of women and girls as well as LGBTIQ persons.

The impressively brave Russian opposition leader Alexander Navalnyj once said: "The best way to predict the future is to create it."

As we mourn Navalnyj's death – and that of countless other defenders of human rights that have lost their lives in the fight for what is right – let us do exactly that: create our future together.

We need to intensify our joint efforts for gender equality, democracy and to fight poverty.

We need to continue standing up for all women's and girls' full enjoyment of human rights. Importantly, this must include their sexual and reproductive health and rights. To promote access to safe and legal abortions, contraceptives, and comprehensive sexuality education is essential.

Also, let us once and for all eliminate men's violence against women and girls, 'honour'-based violence and oppression, as well as putting an end to prostitution and trafficking.

Let us continue to stand up for Women, Peace, and Security. Open, democratic societies are a prerequisite for creating and guaranteeing peace and freedom.

The only way forward is a future in which women and men in all their diversity are free to shape their own lives.

Sweden will do our part to make this future a reality. We will remain a strong voice and actor for gender equality and women's and girls' empowerment and their full enjoyment of all human rights and freedoms. We will continue to be a leading donor of international aid and support initiatives aimed at lifting women and girls out of poverty and strengthening their human rights. Through doing so we can together build a more equal and resilient world better equipped to fight poverty.

Thank you for your attention!

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